

APPLICATION FOR FFY 2001 TITLE IV-E
INDEPENDENT LIVING FUNDS OF THE
CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM
and
STATE PLAN FOR FFY 2002 – 2004

JOHN H. CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

(1) RESPONSIBLE STATE AGENCY

The Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) is the state agency responsible for administering the Title IV-E program; DSS will also administer the Independent Living Program under section 477 (section 477 (b) (2). DSS will cooperate in national evaluations of the effects of the programs implemented to achieve its purposes.

CFCIP FUNDS REQUESTED

Federal Funds Requested	\$2,610,972	
State Match Amount	\$522,194	Source: Account 4800-0041 RESG02 Independent Living Programs

Amount of Federal Funds to be Used for Room and Board: \$783,000

Introduction

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is utilizing the Massachusetts Statewide Policy on Youth as a base for its five-year plan for the Chafee Program funds. This policy (attached) has been developed in collaboration with all the Massachusetts state agencies serving youth and many of the community/private child serving agencies.

The shared vision of the policy is that “All Massachusetts youth grow up to be healthy, caring and economically self-sufficient adults.” Toward this objective, the policy has targeted five strategic goals. Using these goals as a framework, DSS has outlined its independent living plan.

Goal 1: All youth have access to resources that promote positive physical and mental health.

- The Adolescent Outreach Program provides DSS current and former youth with life skills training, employment readiness training, support with job placement, and facilitates youths' access to health care providers, mental health care providers and substance abuse treatment. Expansion to every area office in 2001.
- Working with the Department of Medical Assistance and the DSS area offices, the Outreach program staff will identify those youth about to leave agency care/custody and assist them in completing the application for continued MASS Health coverage. Efforts initiated in 2001 and practice will be fully instituted in 2002. Efforts to extend the health coverage to youth up to age 21 will be pursued with DMA from 2002.
- DSS contracts with providers for independent living programs for DSS youth to prepare them for their transitions to adulthood. Currently, DSS contracts for 198 beds. Efforts to enhance the life skills training provided in these programs will be the focus of the Adolescent Services Unit at DSS from 2001-2004.
- The new Independent Living Support Program provides services/items for DSS youth to encourage their achievement of goals/objectives related to their transition to adulthood. Such items include tutoring, transportation to/from school, tools for job preparation, uniforms for employment or sports team, driver education classes. Implemented in 2000; expansion through 2004.
- The DSS life skill curriculum – Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood (PAYA) is utilized by DSS group care providers, foster parents and Adolescent Outreach staff to assist youth in developing the skills they will need to make successful transitions to adulthood. The curriculum is updated annually with input from youth, providers and staff. Trainings in the use of the curriculum are held statewide. This year 35 PAYA trainings were presented.
- A “soft skills” curriculum for the use of staff, foster parents, group care providers and Outreach staff is presently under development. This curriculum will assist them in helping youth develop self esteem, improve problem solving and decision making skills, manage stress and anger effectively, etc.

Goal 2: *All youth have nurturing relationships with caring adults.*

- The Adolescent Outreach Program provides individualized life skills training, support, and mentoring to DSS youth who are likely to remain in care/custody until discharge and to former foster care youth who “aged out” of DSS. Expansion to serve all area offices in 2001.
- DSS also manages its own mentoring program for older DSS youth. Expansion statewide is planned for 2001-2003.

Goal 3: *All youth have access to safe places for living, learning, and working.*

- DSS provides a continuum of placement services for youth in its care/custody based on their individual needs. Placement categories include foster care, specialized foster care, pre-independent living programs, independent living programs, group care, residential care. Within each category there are different models of care, as well.
- DSS manages its own employment program to assist youth with job readiness skills, placement in career building positions and ongoing job supervision. Expansion planned through 2004.
- Via collaboration with Middlesex Community College and a private property owner, DSS has developed a new program that provides supported housing to youth attending college for a certificate or degree. The program is called A Bridge to a Career (ABC). This program addresses the gap in housing for youth attending the community college. Most public community colleges do not provide dormitories. Expansion to each region of the state in collaboration with the respective community colleges is planned through 2004.
- DSS has contracted with two experienced providers for the provision of a model of residential independent living services for former foster care youth who become homeless or are in danger of becoming homeless. Nine slots will be available as of July 2001. Continuation is planned through 2004.
- Outreach staff are developing contacts with all the homeless shelters throughout Massachusetts to identify young adults who are homeless and were former DSS youth who left the agency at age 18 or older. Efforts in process now through 2004.
- DSS and Commonwealth Corporation jointly issued an RFR for career assessment, employment readiness training, job placement services, etc. for foster care youth.
- DSS will pilot a Support Program for Foster Parents of Adolescents in 3 area offices beginning in the summer of 2001 and continuing through 2002. Expansion to additional area offices is planned for 2002-2004 if the pilot is successful.
- DSS will develop a Discharge Guide for staff, providers and youth to use to improve the process of youth transitioning out of agency care. The Guide will include information on the benefits of remaining in DSS care after age 18, educational support programs, the Discharge Support Program, Outreach services, a checklist to ensure that a youth's needs are met prior to discharge, etc.

Goal 4: *All youth have access to educational and economic opportunity.*

- Massachusetts has instituted the state college tuition waiver program for DSS youth and former DSS youth who are/were in custody through a Care and Protection petition and did not/cannot return home when discharged from agency care. The waiver applies to all state 2 and 4-year colleges and universities. Instituted in fall of 2001.
- The Foster Child Grant Program was developed in January 2001 and provides up to \$6000 of financial aid for current and former DSS youth (in custody via a C&P) who will/have left care at age 18 or older without returning home. This aid may be used at any public or private college.
- DSS manages the William Warren Scholarship Program which provides aid for DSS youth who are attending public or private colleges/universities. Awards are based on academic merit, demonstrated ability to overcome challenges, financial need, etc.
- Two “computer camps” for DSS youth will be held (June, 2001 and August, 2001) to provide intensive computer application program training, instruction and courseware in Word and Excel as well as Interactive Microsoft Office Suite tutorial CD, PC with Windows ’98, color inkjet printer. Additional trainings will be held in 2002 –2004.

Goal 5: All youth have access to structured activities and opportunity for community service and civic participation.

- DSS has developed the position of Youth Development Specialist to facilitate the expansion of the youth leadership opportunities and youth development activities for DSS youth.
- The DSS Youth Advisory Board will be expanded to include 6 regional boards comprised of 6 youth each who meet monthly to discuss issues relating to DSS youth, make recommendations regarding policy/services, etc. These regional boards will send 2 representatives to the Central Office Board that meets quarterly with the Commissioner. Expansion is currently in process. Both the Regional and Central Youth Advisory Boards will continue through 2004.
- DSS is developing a Peer Mentoring Program to provide a system for older, more mature youth to share their experiences and offer support to younger DSS youth.
- DSS youth are working with our Office of Public Affairs and the Recruitment Unit on a campaign to recruit new foster homes and mentors for adolescents.
- Five regionally based DSS Youth Symposiums are planned for the summer of 2001. These events will focus on self-esteem development activities, peer leadership training, stress management, etc.
- The DSS Teen Peer Line has been operational since 1996 and continues to provide youth with the means to speak with another DSS youth about any concerns, questions, recommendations related to being “a DSS kid.” A DSS person is always available in addition to the teen to answer youths’ questions and assist with other needs the caller may present.
- DSS is holding 6 regionally based Youth Recognition Dinners in June 2001 to honor our youth who have achieved a high school diploma, GED certificate, training program certificate, college degree, etc.

- DSS youth are represented on the state's Youth Development Advisory Board, sponsored by the EOHHS.

Services to Youth Ages 18-20

The Department of Social Services provides a wide variety of services to youth who left foster care because they reached age 18 –20, including outreach support services, individualized life skills training, mentoring, employment readiness training, job placement and support, as well as room and board. The state also provides funding for tuition waivers to state colleges and a Foster Child Grant Program (scholarships up to \$6000 for any US college) to youth who were in state custody via a care and protection order and who did not return home upon discharge.

For the purpose of this grant, Massachusetts has defined room and board as rent, security deposit, expenses for utility hook-ups, essential furniture, and food.

DSS Outreach staff are establishing collaborations with the homeless shelters, Department of Transitional Assistance offices, Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees, community mental health and substance abuse treatment programs across the state to identify youth/young adults who are eligible for these services. Once the young adults are identified, Outreach staff will meet them individually to assess their strengths/needs, inform them of the available services, facilitate access to services not provided directly by DSS (i.e. substance abuse and mental health treatment). The Outreach program will also provide or facilitate access to job readiness training, job placement and support, assist with access to education – college, high school, GED programs.

All political subdivisions in the state are served by the program. All the six regions of the state have access to the independent living program services.

Services Relative to Youth's Age

The DSS Independent Living Program serves youth ages 14-20 who have a service plan goal of “independent living” or who are likely to remain in care/custody until discharge at age 18-20. Youth whose service plan goal is “reunify with family” may receive program services if the social worker states that the return home is doubtful. Youth are referred for independent living services by their social worker. Former foster care youth may self refer; DSS also receives referrals from other human service agencies working with former foster care youth. The services provided to each youth/young adult are based on an assessment of individual needs. The Adolescent Outreach Program provides individualized assessment, transitional living planning with youth, life skills training, including educational and employment support.

For youth under age 16, the focus of the services may be directed more to relationship building, mentoring, soft skills development in the areas of anger management, self esteem

building, problem solving and decision making skill development. DSS plans to contract with a community service provider for “outward bound” type groups for those youth for whom the traditional therapeutic interventions have been unsuccessful. For those youth ages 16-18, the focus of services is most often individualized outreach services, core life skill development utilizing the PAYA curriculum, goal planning around education and career, employment readiness and job maintenance skill development as well as housing and discharge planning.

Youth may continue in foster care with DSS after age 18 if they are attending school or a job training program, are compliant with their service plan and willing to accept continued services by signing a Voluntary Placement Agreement. These young adults may remain in care until age 22.

For young adults age 18 – 20 who have left agency custody/care, the independent living services described above are provided including the room and board benefits for discharged young adults. In addition, DSS has contracted for 9 residential transitional living slots for former DSS youth who aged out of the system at age 18 –20. The program, in addition to housing, will provide assessment, life skills training, access to mental health or substance abuse treatment, educational support, job readiness and placement support, etc.

DSS has contracted with Work Opportunities, Unlimited for tracking, employment readiness and job placement/support services for youth ages 14-20. Computer skills training via Instructional Access for 75 youth is planned for June and August of 2001. (Youth are also provided with a PC and printer upon completion of the 21 hours of training.

Youth development activities ranging from participation on Youth Advisory Boards, peer support groups, leadership forums, working on the teen newsletter, Teen Peer Line, etc. are always available to youth without regard to age.

State Plan Collaboration

DSS has shared its plan for independent living services, received input and recommendations for the state plan from both the public and private sector, from the youth it presently serves and from former clients, from the Wampanoag Tribe of Aquinnah. Taking advantage of the forum of both public and private sectors represented at the state Youth Development Advisory Board, the state Adolescent Health Council, the DSS Youth Advisory Board, the Massachusetts Violence Prevention Task Force and the Suicide Prevention Working Group, and WIA councils, and advocates for the homeless. DSS presented its plan for the use of the Chafee Independent Living Grant funding.

DSS heard from the human service providers who serve the homeless that more funding is needed to prevent former foster care youth from becoming homeless and to assist those who already are with both housing and the varied support services, ie. substance abuse treatment, job readiness training, transitional housing. As a result, DSS is utilizing the full

30% allowed of its Chafee grant funding to address this need, including contracting for 9 residential transitional living beds for former foster care youth.

Recommendations were made for improved discharge planning for DSS youth leaving agency care. DSS response is the expansion of the Adolescent Outreach Program to all area offices to serve current and former DSS youth. DSS also is planning the development of a Discharge Guide for use by staff, providers and youth to improve understanding of discharge resources, available DSS services to youth remaining in care after turning age 18, educational support programs, etc.

DSS is collaborating with local landlords, realtors, housing authorities, faith-based housing programs to develop housing resources for former DSS young adults. Ongoing collaborative relationships between DSS and Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs have been strengthened with the expansion of the Department's Discharge Support Program and 9 new transitional living program beds.

A new program model built upon the collaboration of DSS, a local landlord and a state community college has provided a housing solution for many DSS youth, both current and former, who want to attend the community college but need very affordable housing to do so since the community colleges do not offer dormitories. Youth who are open with DSS may use their own DSS vendor payments to pay for their rent; former foster care youth may receive Chafee funding for the first few months until they are able to assume the rent. The program provides a Residential Director and Outreach staff support to assist youth with budgeting, job search, educational needs, and life skills training. DSS plans to replicate this model across the state.

Recommendations were made for greater collaboration between the WIA Councils and the DSS area offices. DSS responded with a collaboration with Commonwealth Corporation and issued a joint RFR to the Work Force Investment Boards to pilot job training, assessment, placement and support to DSS youth.

DSS is working with its Department of Medical Assistance to facilitate the process for youth age 18 leaving agency care to receive MASS Health coverage.

Through the state's Youth Development Collaboration Program, sited at our Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the state agencies and many private providers serving youth share ideas and recommendations to improve the delivery of services to Massachusetts youth. The state plan includes the recommendations of the reviewers, such as transitional living beds, outreach to homeless shelters, expansion of Outreach staff statewide, the creation of a Youth Development staff person. All of these recommendations have been achieved.

Access to Services

All area offices across the state have access to the independent living program services. All youth ages 14-20 who have a service plan goal of “independent living” or who are likely to remain in care/custody until discharge at age 18-20 are eligible for Chafee funded services as are former foster care youth who left the system at age 18-20 without returning home. With an Outreach worker assigned to every area office and regional as well as central office oversight of service delivery, DSS can ensure fair and equitable access and treatment of benefit recipients.

Agency Perspective

Foster children are the Commonwealth’s children. While DSS is primarily responsible for their care, every agency and every citizen of the Commonwealth shares responsibility for meeting the needs of the approximately 11,500 children living in foster care, group or residential care.

Many of these children will be returned home once the risk of abuse/neglect is eliminated or they will be adopted. However, more than 500 of these children/youth “age out” of the system each year without being adopted or returned home. Because these youth have no family to return to, the Commonwealth is their “parent” and must fulfill its responsibility as such. Just as parents prepare their adolescents for adulthood by teaching them life skills, helping them discover their strengths and identify their goals, encouraging them to reach their potential, the state as parent must do the same. The state must make the investment in its children and youth via a comprehensive preparation for adulthood. Otherwise, that investment the agency has made throughout the years to provide the physical and emotional care of youth in its custody, is unlikely to be realized to the detriment of the youth and the community.

I. PLANNED SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

During FFY 2001 -2004, the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) plans to continue its work toward the Independent Living Program goals of: providing comprehensive independent living preparation for youth in DSS placement, integrating these services into system-wide practice and service delivery and promoting greater youth participation in adolescent service provision through the expansion of youth leadership development activities, such as state, regional and national Youth Leadership Symposiums, the Peer Support Groups, Teen Conference, Youth Advisory Board, Teen Peer Line, Employment and Mentoring Programs. In addition, with the flexibility now afforded states under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, DSS will also provide independent living support services to former foster care youth through the Adolescent Outreach Program and will utilize 30% of the state’s grant funding to develop housing services for this population of youth ages 18-21. *(It is important to note that these funds cannot be used to pay for room and board expenses for youth in agency care.)*

This plan is based on the youth development approach which:

- involves youth in the design, delivery and evaluation of services;
- is collaborative;
- is focussed on assets as well as risks;
- is culturally competent; and
- targets services to meet the developmental needs of youth

The DSS Youth Advisory Board has provided input for all elements of this plan.

Adolescent Outreach and Mentoring

- **DSS will expand staffing of the Adolescent Outreach Program to serve all of the area offices across the state.**

The Outreach Program assists youth in developing the life skills necessary to cope with the challenges of adulthood to live self-sufficiently in their communities. Because of this additional investment of Outreach support, these youth are not likely to face the tragedies of homelessness, chronic unemployment, teen pregnancy and criminal behavior that place a burden on society.

The Outreach staff:

1. Maximize youths' potential with problem-solving skills, practice with informed decision-making and connections to the community via the employment and mentoring programs.
2. Maintain network of housing and employment options in the community for youth leaving care.
3. Empower youth to assume responsibility for their own futures by actively participating in the development of their transitional living plan and in the planning process for services and agency discharge, whether that be upon their 18th birthday, high school graduation or college graduation.
4. Convene and facilitate youth led support groups in each region of the state to focus on pregnancy prevention, substance abuse prevention and share strategies for living successfully (with a job, appropriate place to live, etc.) after DSS discharge.
5. Provide intensive, individualized life skill training, using the agency's own life skill assessments and curriculum, to DSS youth ages 16 and older whose service plan goal is independent living. Work collaboratively with DSS social workers and placement providers to ensure appropriate discharge plans.

Highlights of Outreach Program outcomes for last year:

80% of youth were employed
30% were attending a 2 or 4-year college
2% were receiving AFDC

93% had identified support system
77% were using personal budget
93% were in a stable living situation

- **DSS will expand its mentoring program for older youth to support their transition into the community, including career/job exploration, employment, access to appropriate housing, and possible long-term supports.**

Housing

Foster care youth identify housing as a primary concern in planning for their transition from agency care.

DSS will utilize the full 30% of funding allowed by the grant guidelines for a range of residential services to serve the population of youth who left care at age 18 or older and need transitional living support.

- **DSS has developed the Discharge Support Program to pay for start-up costs (i.e. first month's rent, security deposit, essential furniture, etc.) for young adults who are leaving or have left agency care and are in need of such support.**
- **DSS has contracted for nine residential Transitional Living Program slots for former foster care youth age 18-20 who are in need of housing and the support services that will assist them in becoming self sufficient.**

Young adults in receiving from either of the above programs are also eligible for Outreach Program services. The Outreach worker will assess each young adult's strengths and needs and determine the appropriate services that will facilitate his/her functioning independently and successfully in the community. Following this assessment, the Outreach worker will work individually with each young adult to connect him/her with needed services, i.e. housing, employment, educational/vocational services, etc.

- **DSS will continue to provide substitute care services to youth who remain in care after their 18th birthday if that youth is enrolled full time in an educational/vocational program (high school, GED program, 2 or 4-year college).**
- A support program for foster parents of adolescents will be piloted in 3 area offices and will provide training, individual and group support, consultation and intervention as well as resource information to foster parents of adolescents. Adolescent Outreach staff will work with the area office family resource staff to identify the foster parents for participation. The implementation of the program is scheduled for the fall of 2001 and will continue into 2002. If successful, replication will occur in 2002 through 2004.
- **DSS will review with other state agencies current housing policy and, where possible, create preferences for current and former foster children who are not adopted and not returned home.**

Where applicable, the Department of Housing and Community Development will be encouraged to prioritize funding for programs that improve outcomes for current and former foster children. Local housing authorities will be encouraged to prioritize public housing for former foster children. Owners and managers of private, government-assisted housing will be encouraged to prioritize housing units for former foster children. The two agencies providing the Transitional Living Program services under DSS contract have well established relationships with the local housing authorities and HUD. Both programs offer MRVP slots.

- **In order to maintain stable housing, foster youth will also require support with job training and placement; medical/dental services; mental health/substance abuse services; independent living skill development; etc. Therefore, DSS will also collaborate with:**

- I. the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to leverage education and job development resources, particularly priority access to the One-Stop Career Centers located across the state;
DSS in collaboration with Commonwealth Corporation issued a joint RFR for employment readiness training and job placement services for current or former DSS youth to assist them in developing the employment skills they will need to become self sufficient.
- II. the Department of Medical Assistance to access Mass Health for all youth leaving DSS care/custody at age 18 or older to ensure that youth who are eligible receive the medical insurance they need to pay for medical/dental and mental health care;
- III. the Department of Education, local LEA's, and community educational programs to identify and gain access to the appropriate services/programs for these youth to achieve their educational and/or vocational goals;
- IV. the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership to coordinate and utilize mental health services; and
- V. the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health and Mental Retardation and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to access any and all services for these former foster care youth to assist them in maximizing their potential to living self-sufficiently in the community.

Education

Foster care youth acknowledge that education is key to their ability to obtain and keep good paying jobs. Massachusetts can support improved educational outcomes for foster children in the following areas:

- **DSS has successfully collaborated with the State Administration, Legislature, Board of Higher Education, and EOHHS to expand educational assistance for current and former foster care youth who wish to attend college. Massachusetts**

now has two financial support programs for youth attending higher education. The first is a Tuition Waiver Program for current or former DSS youth attending state colleges/universities. The second is the Foster Child Grant Program which provides up to \$6000 of educational expenses for current or former DSS youth who were in custody under a C&P order and who were not able to return home. This grant can be used at public or private colleges.

- DSS will utilize approximately \$35,000 of grant funds annually to help support the William Warren Scholarship for youth who have demonstrated the ability and willingness to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals and create an application system for grant eligible youth to apply for assistance with payment of vocational programs and employment related expenses such as tools for plumbing/electrical apprenticeships. Donations from the private sector assist with this scholarship program.
- DSS will continue to seek stronger partnerships with state community colleges, inventory community college resources and train staff to access these resources. The Adolescent Outreach Program staff are linking with the colleges in each region of the state to ensure DSS has knowledge of and access to the available services.
- DSS has recently developed the ABC Program (A Bridge to a Career) with the collaboration of the Middlesex Community College and a private landlord in Lowell, MA to provide housing and Outreach support services to current and former DSS youth attending the college. This program fills a significant gap in housing services since the majority of public community colleges in the state do not offer dormitories. DSS plans to replicate this program in each region of the state.
- DSS will work with the Department of Education and EOHHS to identify and overcome barriers foster children face in the educational system and to collaboratively address the educational concerns of DSS youth in short term placements/shelters.
- DSS will collaborate with the Department of Education, local LEA's, and community educational programs to identify and gain access to the appropriate services/programs for current and former foster care youth to assist them in achieving their educational/vocational goals.

Job Development

- DSS will utilize \$4,000 of grant funding to support the DSS Employment Program, which has placed more than 120 youth in career building positions since its inception in 1997.

- **DSS will improve job opportunities for current and former foster care youth by strengthening links between the DSS area offices and the One-Stop Career Centers, funded through the WIA. DSS will seek to improve access to WIA funded resources and encourage DSS youth to participate on WIA Youth Councils.**
- **DSS is collaborating with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Commonwealth Corporation and EOHHS to ensure that a portion of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) statewide youth funds will support demonstration projects designed to improve education and employment outcomes for DSS foster children. Jointly funded RFR was issued in March 2001. Program services will begin in July 2001.**
- **DSS will explore the feasibility of creating a hiring preference at all state agencies for current and former foster children when filling state positions. DSS has hired a former foster care youth to work as an Outreach worker, effective July 2001.**

Access to Health Care

Former foster care youth have expressed frustration with their abilities to access health care. Many youth are not aware of eligibility requirements and many eligible youth do not seek health coverage once they have left state custody.

- **DSS will seek to ensure that all eligible youth receive access to appropriate health coverage. DSS will continue to work with the state Department of Medical Assistance and EOHHS to improve health care access for youth who are being discharged from state custody. Outreach staff assist youth exiting care complete the application for continued health coverage via MASS Health.**
- **DSS will work with DMA and EOHHS to identify the number of youth who would be eligible for extended health coverage up to age 22, project the cost of coverage and develop recommendations.**

Administration and Policy

- **DSS will expand the eligibility for independent living services funded through this grant to youth who are likely to remain in custody/care until age 18 or later and will continue to serve those youth who have a service plan goal of independent living.**

Adoption or a return home may have been the earlier plan for these youth, but circumstances, the youth's behavioral/mental health needs, and/or the lack of appropriate resources necessitated the change in the goal. For some youth, long-term foster care may be the plan because the youth prefers not to be adopted and cannot return home.

Regardless of the reason youth remain in care until or after age 18, these independent living services will be offered to assist them in developing the life skills necessary to cope with the challenges of adulthood and live self-sufficiently in their communities.

- **DSS will review Standards of Practice and policies related to discharge of youth age 18 and older and make recommendations for revisions as needed. The Chafee Grant funds will serve these eligible DSS youth up to age 21. As previously stated, state funds will be used to provide case management, support, and placement services for DSS youth up to age 22 as long as they meet the eligibility criteria stated in the DSS Permanency Planning Policy.**

The DSS Permanency Planning Policy is presently under revision. Key changes relative to youth with a service plan goal of independent living include the statement that DSS expects youth to continue in care (sign a Voluntary Placement Agreement) after reaching age 18 to continue their education or vocational training. The draft policy also places a priority on the establishment of a permanent relationship with a consistent, caring and committed adult in the youth's life.

- **DSS will continue monitoring of residential programs statewide with the Residential and Adolescent Services Unit staff to ensure the programs' compliance with the Standards of Independent Living, including the Life Skill Assessment and Discharge Case/Closing Plan, and to provide on-going technical assistance to both substitute care providers and agency staff to identify barriers to successful utilization and develop strategies for any necessary improvements to the assessment format.**
- **To ensure that DSS youth are provided with the best available resources to assist them in successfully transitioning from agency care to self sufficiency in the community, the staff of the Residential and Adolescent Unit will continue to provide statewide training to staff and providers on effective discharge planning for youth and present current resource information to all area offices. The training will also address the Standards of Independent Living, the "Over 18" Policy and the Department's plan to continue youth in care after age 18 if they are in compliance with the terms of the policy as well as the Independent Living and Discharge Support Programs.**
- **The Adolescent Services Unit will work with the Office of Management, Planning and Analysis to improve data collection regarding all DSS adolescents. The Outreach Program has instituted a new data collection system for the youth served which will allow DSS to provide more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of Outreach Program services.**

Training

- The staff of the Adolescent Services Unit will continue to provide ongoing statewide training to area staff on effective discharge planning for youth, including a review of the Standards of Independent Living, current resource information, and the “Over 18” Policy which clarifies the Department’s plan to continue youth in care after age 18 if they are in compliance with the terms of the policy.
- DSS will continue to increase the number of trainers statewide who are available to provide independent living training workshops on PAYA, the Department’s life skill curriculum, which will, in turn, equip a greater majority of social workers, foster parents and group care program staff to work with youth in care to prepare them for their transition to independent living. The annual number of PAYA trainings, which are presented across the state, has increased from 16 per year to 35 in FFY 2000; the goal for the next four years is to maintain this high level of training statewide, including the presentation of trainings specific to special populations.
- DSS plans to extend the mandate for life skills assessment and training to all youth age 14 and older in foster home settings. Trainings to equip foster parents and staff to provide this essential service will be ongoing.

Leadership Development/Peer Support

- DSS will continue to maintain a web page on its DSS web site for adolescent services at which youth, staff and providers may access the Adolescent Handbook for youth entering care or presently in care to address the common concerns and questions ranging from: court involvement, visitation, foster care reviews, clothing allotments, education, discharge planning, religion, etc. Hard copies of the Handbook will also be distributed to all area offices. This web site will also provide information about the Department’s adolescent services, resources and upcoming events.
- DSS will expand the Youth Employment Program to serve youth in the Central region of the state in addition to the Boston, Metro, Southeast and Northeast regions. Selected youth will continue to be trained and placed in career building positions with employers who have entered into partnerships with DSS. Aggressive recruitment of private employers to join with DSS in training and employing our youth will continue.
- DSS will continue the peer leadership groups in each region of the state, which focus on violence prevention, pregnancy prevention, understanding diversity, improving parenting skills, and coping successfully with independent living.

- **Regional Youth Symposiums, planned by DSS youth, encouraging youth development, enhanced self esteem, collaborative skills, stress reduction strategies, etc. held in June and July 2001 will become annual events.**
- **DSS will continue the Teen Peer Line which provides youth in care with a support line to call to talk to other youth about their questions, feelings, and to receive information and referral services.**
- **DSS will continue to present workshops for youth in each region of the state targeting life skill development in areas such as, educational and job training opportunities; apartment hunting and maintenance; financial aid for higher education; and money management.**
- **DSS will continue the publication of the Department's youth newsletter, THE WAVE, which is written by and for youth in agency care.**
- **DSS will develop a peer mentoring program, with the assistance of a sub-committee of the DSS Youth Advisory Board, for former foster care youth to provide guidance and support to current DSS youth. Thorough screening, training and supervision of both the mentors and mentees will provide the basis of this program.**

II. FY '2000 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) has utilized the Chafee - Title IV-E Independent Living Grant funds to continue its efforts to develop and maintain a comprehensive approach to life skills training for youth in out-of-home placement and integrate these services into system-wide practice and service delivery, promoting greater youth participation in adolescent service provision.

During FY '00, the Department accomplished significant gains in Independent Living services; these achievements are as follows:

- **DSS expanded the Adolescent Outreach Program from 9 area offices to 25 this year. Outreach staff provide individualized life skills training to DSS youth ages 14-21 to assist them in identifying their strengths, working to address their needs, and developing to their potential. These services support the youth in mastering the skills they will need to live self sufficiently upon discharge from agency care. From October 1999 to June 2001, the Outreach program served 603 youth. Approximately 300 additional youth who were not officially opened as Outreach cases, received referral/resource information, assistance with financial aid/college applications, housing support, etc.**

- The Transition Team, a specialized outreach unit, was initiated as a pilot program in the Metro region of the state to work specifically with current and former Chafee eligible DSS youth/young adults who have significant mental health/substance abuse issues requiring more intensive, individualized transition services.
- Staff of the Adolescent Services Unit presented at each area office's staff meeting a review of all the available adolescent resources and youth development activities, including the new Independent Living Support Program, Discharge Support Program, state tuition waivers, Foster Child Grant Program, transitional living options, Peer Leadership trainings, Regional Youth Symposiums, Regional Youth Recognition Dinners, etc. These presentations will continue this coming year to ensure that social work staff are informed of all the resources/activities available to agency youth and that area staff know whom to call at Central Office with questions regarding adolescent services.
- The Department's Employment Program placed 30 youth in career-building positions to assist them in gaining experience in the type of job they hope to obtain following the completion of their education. The Employment and Mentoring Coordinator has expanded the services to agency youth in the Western and Southeast Regions of the state and has focused the program efforts in these two areas of need: employment preparation/job placement and mentoring. The Coordinator provides individualized training to youth in the areas of job preparation (interviewing skills, appropriate workplace behavior and dress, conflict resolution, etc.); skills development; job placement; and ongoing support.
- Sixty-seven (67) agency youth attending two or four year colleges received William Warren Scholarships from the Department this fiscal year.
- The agency continued its support of the many youth leadership activities, such as the publication of the teen newsletter, *The Wave*, the Youth Advisory Board, youth led peer support groups, and youth staffed Teen Peer Line. This year, prompted by recommendations from the Youth Advisory Board, the agency's annual statewide teen conference was replaced by five Regional Youth Symposiums which are designed by the youth leaders in each region to focus on their particular needs. These symposiums are smaller, thus allowing for greater team building in the day's activities.
- The Department's Scholarship Guide was revised and expanded to include additional scholarship information and applications most relevant to agency youth.
- Monitoring of the Department's residential/group care programs statewide continued to ensure their compliance with the Department's Standards for Independent Living, including the use of the Independent Living Skill Assessment and Discharge/Case Closing Plan. Programs that were experiencing difficulty received technical assistance and training from the Adolescent and Residential Services Unit staff. Training workshops to assist staff in better use of the PAYA life skill curriculum, the assessment and overall discharge planning were also provided statewide.

- A “soft skills” curriculum was developed this year to assist Outreach staff work with youth in enhancing their skills of problem solving, decision making, values clarification, etc. Trainings will be expanded in FY 02 to case management staff and providers.
- The number of PAYA life skill trainers was increased by more than 500 during this reporting year.
- The TEEN PEER LINE which has been operational since September, 1996, continues to provide youth in care with a support line to call to talk to other youth about their questions, feelings, and to receive information and referral services.
- The number of adolescents participating in the PAYA program is estimated to be at least 55% of the youth ages 14-23 in out-of-home placement.
- The tracking analysis of youth discharged from the Adolescent Outreach Program indicates that 64% of discharged youth had a full or part-time job on the day the statistics were taken; an additional 14% of youth had been successfully employed within three months prior and were actively looking for a job. Two percent (2%) of the youth were performing volunteer work or involved in an apprenticeship in preparation for paid employment. Eighty-five (85%) achieved a high school diploma or G.E.D. or are currently enrolled in an educational program (college/high school/GED program).
- The training of the community volunteers of the Foster Care Review Unit in adolescent issues and in the use of the Independent Living Skill Assessment has been ongoing. The purpose is to ensure independent living service integration with service plan tasks and planful discharge practices statewide.
- As a result of the change in the Department’s “Over 18” Policy, which states that area offices should continue youth in care after age 18 if they meet the policy criteria (attend a full-time school program, maintain compliance with their service plan, and continue to need agency services), more youth are encouraged to stay in school to achieve their diplomas, GED certificates or to attend college.
- The Department’s Mentoring Program was implemented in the Boston, Metro, Northeast and Southeast regions of the state. The Program Coordinator has been actively recruiting responsible adults to become volunteer mentors who are able and willing to provide role modeling, support and encouragement to youth who do not have a family or support system on which to depend. Presently the program has 20 mentors matched with youth. The mentors provide a valuable connection to the community and assistance with facilitating successful transitions from care. They assist youth with housing, employment, recreation and personal goal achievement. In some instances, the match between youth and mentor may even develop into a long-term source of support.

- Educational/Vocational Fairs were held in each region of the state during FFY'00 to enable youth in care to realize the training/educational opportunities available to them after attainment of a high school diploma or GED certificate. A representative from the state scholarship office was present at the fairs to provide youth with information about the various sources of financial aid.
- The Department's teen newsletter, *The Wave*, has continued to provide a voice for youth in care and an effective means of informing youth of the opportunities/services available to them both in the agency and the community. The feedback from youth, social workers and care providers continues to be very positive. Each addition of *The Wave* includes a reminder to youth to attend their foster care reviews.
- The Department has produced a handbook for youth who are in or entering care/placement answering some common questions and providing resource information, including the number of the Teen Peer Line for youth to call for support. This handbook, which was a recommendation of the Department's Youth Advisory Board, will be posted on the agency's adolescent web page.
- Several workshops for youth were held across the state targeting life skill development in areas such as, decision-making skills to keep youth safe, healthy and happy; educational and job training opportunities; apartment hunting and maintenance; money management; and appreciation of diversity.
- The Peer Leadership Groups targeting violence prevention, parenting support, pregnancy prevention and independent living support continued to serve all regions of the state.
- The Youth Advisory Board, comprised of twelve youth representing the six regions of the state, continued to meet with the Commissioner providing a medium for DSS youth to voice their concerns and recommendations regarding agency services, policies, etc. The Board met to make recommendations for the use of this grant money and has approved all of the goals and objectives stated in this application.

III. STATUS OF CURRENT INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM EFFORTS

A. Agency Standards for Independent Living

Implemented in January 1996, the Department's Standards for Independent Living have provided the necessary direction and format for providers of out-of-home care to follow in teaching DSS youth the life skills necessary to successfully transition from care into the community. These Standards have also given the agency staff the guidance to assist them in planning appropriate discharges for its youth, mandating that youth served by DSS should be systematically and comprehensively

prepared for independent living to enable them to function as productive members of society. The Standards which apply to all youth in DSS placements who are age 14 and older mandate that life skills assessments be completed every six months and that two hours weekly of life skills PAYA (Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood) training be provided to these youth by their substitute care providers. The PAYA curriculum must be used as a basis for the training. The life skill instruction may be provided individually or via formalized groups.

Using the Independent Living Assessment, the substitute care provider, youth and case manager, collaboratively evaluate the adolescent's life skill strengths and needs, within twenty (20) working days of placement. The assessment facilitates the identification and prioritization of the life skill training needed to prepare youth for independent living. (The more specific life skill assessments within each PAYA module may be used to supplement this format.)

The results of the ILS Assessment also provide a basis for task-specific service planning relative to independent living readiness and facilitate the assignment of responsibility and time frames for achievement of each task. The assessment should be attached to the service plan to identify provider tasks. Once a youth's life skill needs have been prioritized, he/she begins working on the appropriate life skill module of the PAYA curriculum.

The ILS Assessment is reviewed at the Foster Care Review meetings to monitor the youth's progress toward identified independent living goals. The substitute care provider is expected to attend the Foster Care Review and bring a copy of the ILS Assessment with a narrative summarizing the results of the assessment and planned tasks/activities to address identified life skill training needs. (A copy of the Independent Living Assessment is included in the Appendices.)

Independent Living Skills Re-Assessment

The ILS Assessment should be reviewed and revised jointly by the substitute care provider and youth at a face-to-face meeting that occurs every six months and/or prior to a youth's discharge from the placement setting. The DSS case manager may be invited to participate in the re-assessment meeting and is given a copy of the re-assessment and explanatory narrative for filing in the youth's case record. It is suggested that the ILS Re-Assessment be attached to the youth's service plan. The re-assessment measures the youth's life skill achievements during the last six months and identifies additional needs/goals relative to independent living. The tasks/activities necessary to address identified goals as well as the person(s) responsible for working with the youth to achieve the goals will be specified on the re-assessment form. The results of the ILS Re-Assessment should be reviewed at the Foster Care Review meetings to ensure that necessary life skill training is provided. The substitute care provider is expected to attend the Foster Care Review and bring a copy of the ILS Assessment with a narrative summarizing the

results of the assessment and planned tasks/activities to address identified life skill training needs.

Discharge Planning

In order to enhance the Department's ability to plan successful discharges for youth, the staff of the Residential and Adolescent Services Unit have been and will continue to provide statewide trainings and technical assistance to field staff to assist them in ensuring that the Standards of Independent Living are met and that the "Over 18" policy is interpreted to encourage youth to remain in agency care in order to complete their education (whether that be high school, a G.E.D. program or college), and to identify and access the necessary resources for youth while in care and prior to discharge.

DSS will develop a Discharge Support Guide for agency staff, outreach workers, providers, and youth to ensure more planful discharges from agency care. This will become the 6th module of its PAYA life skill curriculum

Although there are fundamental components of all discharge plans, i.e. stable and appropriate housing, and employment/source of income, successful discharge planning must also address the many, varied issues, such as a support system and personal goals, which are unique to each youth and so essential to the success of a youth's transition from care to the community. Also key to a successful discharge is information sharing; youth must be given their medical and educational history, any personal items or photographs that might be in the case record or held by the social worker or foster care provider. As social service providers, we know how traumatic planning for discharge can be for youth. As responsible guardians for youth, it is our duty to equip these young adults with the skills and resources they will need to face life's challenges. Youth served by the Outreach Program have often said leaving care is exciting but frightening. What has made the positive difference for them is the support and preparation (knowing what to expect and having the opportunities to practice new skills) prior to discharge. "It makes that big gap between childhood and adulthood easier to cross," said one youth.

The Department's Standards for Independent Living recognize the importance of planning for discharges and specify that the Department shall provide a written "Notice of Intent to Discharge" to all youth with a Permanency Planning Goal of Independent Living within ninety (90) days of the anticipated date of discharge from substitute care and/or DSS case closing. A copy of this written notice is also forwarded to the substitute care provider. Attached to this notice must be an Independent Living Discharge/Case Closing Plan providing a detailed description of the discharge resources for the youth. (A copy of the Discharge/Case Closing Plan is included in the Appendices.) The DSS case manager and substitute care provider, in collaboration with the youth, evaluate the youth's readiness for discharge by completing the ILS Re-Assessment and the Discharge/Case Closing

Plan. Any outstanding independent living needs should be prioritized at that time. The tasks/activities necessary to address identified needs and achieve targeted goals, as well as the person responsible to assist in the process, should be specified on the Discharge/Case Closing Plan. The Plan must also include a detailed description of the discharge resources for the youth including:

- appropriate and stable housing arrangements*
- employment/source of income
- appropriate community resources such as Medicaid, medical, mental health, dental providers, recreational, educational, vocational, day care and legal services.

The Plan also addresses: personal needs, education, and community living supports.

*It is the responsibility of the Department, with assistance from the substitute care providers, to ensure that all youth discharged from substitute care shall have an appropriate and stable (see definitions below) living arrangement available to them upon discharge. **IN NO CASE MAY YOUTH BE PLACED IN INAPPROPRIATE HOUSING.** If appropriate housing cannot be found, the youth should not be discharged.

“Appropriate Housing” is defined as all housing except shelters, hotel/motels and dwellings that fail to meet governmental health and building code standards. Appropriate housing can include apartments, shared apartments, small boarding homes, room and board arrangements and housing with a relative, friends and former foster parents.

“Stable Housing” is defined as housing in which there would be reasonable expectation that the residence will remain accessible for the first 12 months after discharge.

B. Life Skills Curriculum

To ensure continuity in the life skills training provided to the youth in agency care, the Department has mandated in the Standards for Independent Living that all programs must utilize the PAYA (Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood) curriculum. The components of the PAY A curriculum include five (5) life skills modules, each of which incorporates a number of related skill areas as described below:

Module 1: Money, Home and Food Management
Module 2: Personal Care, Health, Safety and Decision-Making
Module 3: Education, Job Seeking and Job Maintenance
Module 4: Housing, Transportation, Community Resources, Laws and Recreation
Module 5: Young Parents Guide – Sexuality, Reproduction, Decision-Making, Pre-Natal Care, Pregnancy, Child Development, Child Safety, Physical Care, Education and Career Planning and Housing

The three components of each skill topic include:

- Assessment - to measure the youth's current level of skill mastery.
- Skill Plan - to guide the adolescent, his/her foster parent and social worker in defining an action plan to promote skill building in the topic areas identified as needing increased mastery. (The skill plan can be used to document the specific tasks and activities which are to be included in the service plan for adolescents in substitute care who are age 14 or older.)
- Activity Workbook - to provide exercises and related resource information to support the adolescent as he/she learns and practices newly learned skills.

The PAYA curriculum also includes a Training Guide to assist staff and foster parents in the implementation of the program services. Strategies for working with adolescents around readiness for community living and teaching specific life skills are discussed in the Guide as are recommendations for using the Life Skill Assessment format. Preparation for agency discharge and the after-care needs of youth are also addressed.

The curriculum has been regularly revised since its implementation in 1989 using input from youth and life skill trainers to ensure its relevance to the needs of our adolescent population. Most recently, Module 2 was revised to incorporate the most current information on substance abuse, HIV and Hepatitis B; Module 3 was also updated to include more information on scholarships, grants and loans, etc.

Training

The Department provided 35 PAYA trainings for case managers, foster parents and group care providers at regularly scheduled one-day workshops across the state during the past year, in order to certify them in the use of the PAYA curriculum. These trainings not only provide participants with the knowledge to implement the PAYA program but also present strategies and techniques for readying youth for life skill training; reaching resistant youth; and providing youth with the support/resources to facilitate the actual transition process. The majority of these trainings were presented in the training of trainers format, certifying participants to

train others on their staff, thereby equipping a greater number of caretakers to teach life skills to the youth in their care, per the Independent Living Standards.

Incentive Program

Since the implementation of the PAYA life skills program, the Department has been awarding incentives to youth for their successful completion of a skill module. In order to qualify for an incentive, a youth must master the skills addressed in the individual module; this includes individual need assessments, goal setting, focused, diligent work and practice of new skills. Rewarding adolescents for their successful completion of a skill module encourages his/her development of self-esteem, we believe, and empowers the youth to continue efforts toward independent living preparation. The youth also learn to set goals for themselves and work toward self-improvement as well as a tangible reward. The incentives relate to life skills and are intended to support the practice of newly learned skills, providing youth with additional opportunities to practice such independent living skills as budgeting, banking, educational planning, acquisition of housing, etc.

Following is a summary of the incentive awards, which are available to adolescents who have completed one or more of the modules. For each life skill module completed, a youth may select one incentive.

- \$100 for deposit in a savings account
- \$100 for deposit in a checking account
- \$100 for the purchase of a \$200 savings bond
- \$100 for payment of GED program, SAT application fees, college applications
- payment for driver's education (maximum \$200 and receipt or statement of program cost must be submitted)
- reimbursement of travel expenses (maximum \$200) to visit a college, school or training program (receipts and/or mileage logs must be submitted)
- clothing check of \$150
- \$200 toward security deposit for an apartment (**Youth must be within 3 months of discharge to receive this incentive.**)
- \$50 for driver's test and license
- \$50 for self or family portrait

(Specific requests are also awarded as long as they relate to independent living.)

The numbers of youth working on life skills training using the PAYA curriculum have increased each year, especially since the integration of the Independent Living Standards into our service delivery system for residential and group care programs. Unfortunately, the agency's computer system, Family Net, is not yet able to accurately track statewide the life skills work in which youth are participating. However, by agency mandate, all youth ages 14 and older in group care and independent living programs should be working on life skills training using the PAYA curriculum. We estimate that approximately 40% of

youth ages 14 and older in foster care are participating in life skills training. Using the data of youth in placement as of December 2000, we estimate that more than 1600 youth are involved in learning independent living skills. We are continuing to work on ensuring that all youth ages 14 – 22, regardless of placement location, receive PAYA life skill training for at least 2 hours per week.

C. Adolescent Outreach Program

Designed to provide intensive, individualized independent living skills assessment and training to youth in out-of-home placement, the Department's Adolescent Outreach Program, supported by the Title IV-E Independent Living Grant funds, has been successful in its mission. This program enhances the agency's capacity to better prepare youth, age 14-21 (particularly those determined to be at high risk for failure in the transitional living process), for moving from placement to independence and strengthens their chances of leading productive lives within the community after discharge. This model allows for a highly individualized approach and accommodates youth with a variety of clinical issues and cognitive functions. With the new, more flexible guidelines of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, the Outreach Program will also serve youth who have been discharged from DSS at age 18 or later and are in need of support with independent living services. These youth may be self-referrals or may be referred to the program by community service agencies, homeless shelters, former foster parents, social workers, etc.

The program is presently staffed by 28 Outreach staff. An additional 4 staff will begin in July 2001 so that all area offices across the state will receive Outreach support services. Overall program management and supervision is presently provided by the Independent Living Coordinator and Adolescent Specialist. Working closely with the DSS case managers, foster parents, group care providers and community service providers, outreach staff offer youth opportunities to learn life skills through practical activities and achievements in their communities. Fundamental to the program's success is youth participation and empowerment. Youth are essential partners in their own goal setting, service planning, and life skill training, a key factor which facilitates their successful transitions into the community.

Within a safety net of adult supervision and support, youth are encouraged to **practice** newly acquired skills and utilize problem-solving techniques effectively. It is the program philosophy that youth who are encouraged to believe/rely on themselves for success in life, provided opportunities to practice their skills and acknowledge their abilities, will be more likely to succeed. In the Adolescent Outreach Program, the skills of independence are stressed and youth are continually empowered to establish goals, make choices and practice newly acquired skills. Youth are also prepared to handle mistakes, disappointments and failures. The ultimate goal is to equip youth to live independently within the community, become self-supportive and able to advocate for themselves, as necessary. Through focused discussions around decision-making/problem solving, community-based activities and goal-focused skill building tasks, youth develop the skills

necessary to cope with the challenges of adulthood and live self-sufficiently in their communities.

Each full-time Outreach Worker carries an active caseload of 15 adolescents. (The caseload is pro-rated for those staff who work part-time.) In addition, the workers also provide six months of tracking services to the adolescents who have been discharged from the program. Following the six months of tracking, youth are moved to a closed status. However, prior to the closing, all youth are encouraged to contact the program should they ever need additional services relative to independent living.

The duties of the Adolescent Outreach Workers include the following:

- individual life skills assessment and training for referred youth utilizing the PAYA curriculum modules;

Staff assess each youth's individual needs, teach life skills and monitor his/her practice of newly acquired skills. They assist youth in determining job interests/abilities, accessing necessary education/training, finding and keeping a job, creating and managing a personal budget, locating a place to live, practicing informed decision making, managing personal health care, developing a support network within the community, etc.

- joint development of a transitional living (TIL) plan with the youth;
- collaboration with youth, case manager, substitute care provider in the development of a comprehensive discharge plan;
- development of a network of housing options for youth entering the community;
- development of a community-based network of vocational and employment programs for youth, including GED services, WIA services, Job Corps, Chamber of Commerce, vocational schools, and skill building training programs as well as the Department of Employment and Training;
- development and maintenance of regional resource guides of community services for adolescents;
- group life skills training using the PAYA curriculum;

These groups provide an alternative mode of learning for those youth who require the support of other teens in addressing the issues of independent living.

- facilitation of peer support groups addressing adolescent issues such as, teen pregnancy prevention, acceptance of cultural diversity, independent living support, substance abuse prevention, alternatives to violence, and teen parent support; and

- tracking and support to youth discharged from the program for 6 months following termination of Outreach services.

Outcomes

Since its implementation, the Adolescent Outreach Program has been successful in assisting youth to reach their life skill goals. Highlights of the most recent statistical review in August 2000 are presented below. The percentages are based on a total of 44 youth discharged from the program during the six-month period prior to August 2000. Seventy-five (75%) percent of the youth were age 18 or older.

- 64% of the youth were employed part-time or full-time;
- an additional 14% had recently been employed and were actively seeking re-employment;
- 4% were participating in a vocational training program or engaged in an apprenticeship
- 14% were receiving SSI benefits;
- 31% of the discharged youth were enrolled in high school or a GED/vocational training program;
- 51% attained a high school diploma or GED certificate; among these youth, 50% were enrolled in a 2 or 4 year college;
- 93% had an identified support system;
- 87% had solid self advocacy skills; and
- 93% were known to be in a stable living situation; of this group, 27% were open DSS cases receiving their own vendor (foster care) payments.

The full report, **Tracking Caseload Statistics, August 2000**, is included in the Appendices along with the **Active Caseload Statistics, August 2000**.

Youth Leadership Activities

The Department plans to continue its successful efforts toward furthering leadership and empowerment opportunities for the youth of the agency during the next four years. Youth will continue to be involved in their own treatment planning as well as placement review at Foster Care Reviews. The Department has made a concerted effort through the Outreach Program, the Youth Advisory Board and reminders in our youth newsletter, *THE WAVE*, to encourage youth to attend and participate. Youth will continue to have available to them many youth leadership opportunities focusing on peer support, program development, service delivery evaluations, and special events planning and presentation. Through such activities, youth enjoy opportunities to learn from one another, function as role models for their peers, and address issues related to their “in care” status. Youth report that involvement in leadership activities helps them recognize their own strengths, increases their self-esteem and provides them with a very satisfying sense of accomplishment. The

youth leadership achievements of FFY'00 and future planned activities are described on the following pages.

Partnerships for Opportunity - Youth Employment Program

The Youth Employment Program placed 30 youth in career building positions during this past year. We recruited corporate employers who were interested in joining with the Department in a partnership to give our youth the chance to demonstrate their skills and gain new ones. The Department selected, trained and supervised each youth employee to ensure him/her the best chance of success. The results have been consistently positive. Some of the positions these youth assumed include administrative assistant, receptionist, para-legal trainee and other positions requiring computer and secretarial skills. The employers were all more than satisfied with the work these youth produced and in each case, offered the youth the opportunity to continue their employment or return next summer. In addition to jobs, these employers also provided our youth with the benefits of job mentoring and support. A few companies have offered to fund future training for youth, such as para-legal and computer courses. Each employer is continuing with the program and many will hire at least one additional youth during the summer of 2001.

This year the Department will be expanding the program to serve additional youth in the Boston, Metro, Northeast, Southeast and Central regions of the state. We are continuing to recruit new employers as well as individuals who may be interested in mentoring. (A copy of the Youth Employment Program brochure is included in the Appendices.)

With the assistance and support of the Outreach Program staff, many youth and young adults have attained employment in their communities. As of August 2000, 80% of the youth in the active Outreach caseload were employed.

Peer Led Support Groups

Peer Led Support Groups will continue to be offered in each region of the state to all in-care youth 14 years of age and older. Groups generally meet monthly for periods of six months. Two Peer Leaders and an Adolescent Outreach Worker facilitate each group. The focus of most groups is risk prevention, support and guidance. However, individual group topics are determined by the Peer Leaders in order to reflect the needs of each geographical area. Group topics offered last year included pregnancy prevention, violence prevention, substance abuse, anger management, and planning for the future. Group participants are recruited through advertisements in *The Wave* and postings in area offices. Although each group decides individually on content and specific expectations, certain ground rules, such as confidentiality and commitment, are strenuously enforced by all support groups.

To increase the number of youth leaders across the state, two peer leadership trainings were held in April 2001, training more than 30 new leaders.

Youth Advisory Board

The Department's Youth Advisory Board meets every three months, providing a medium for DSS youth in out-of-home placement to voice their concerns and suggestions to the Commissioner on issues facing youth in care. The present twelve members of the Board are statewide representatives for their peers' interests, concerns, and questions. The agenda topics for each meeting are developed by the Board members based upon their own ideas/concerns or those of the youth they represent. The Teen Peer Line was the result of recommendations made by Advisory Board members, as was the development of a mentoring program for older DSS youth. Another suggestion realized is the Adolescent Handbook, which was written with guidance and input from DSS youth, and addresses the most commonly asked questions about the Department and foster care. The most recent achievement of the Board was a television commercial for the recruitment of foster parents for adolescents. Board members starred in the commercial.

Plans are underway to develop Regional Youth Advisory Boards to afford more youth the opportunity to represent their peers and make recommendation to improve agency services. Two members of each Regional Board will, in turn, sit on the Central Youth Advisory Board that meets with the Commissioner.

Teen Peer Line

Resulting from a recommendation by the Youth Advisory Board, the Teen Peer Line began operation in September 1996. The purpose of the line is to provide youth in care with a support line to call other youth about their questions, feelings, and to receive information and support. In July 1999 we made some changes to the Line. Youth can call the 800 number any day of the week (9am – 5pm), but they can also call after hours and leave a message. The Staff Coordinator answers all calls and will page the DSS youth counselor, who has been trained to respond to all types of calls/needs, to return the call from outside the office or at the DSS office, depending on the presenting issue of the caller. The staff coordinator will monitor calls from the office to ensure that the callers' needs are addressed or, if necessary, referred to the appropriate resources, i.e. in cases of crisis. The most common reasons for calls are for advice/support; to request educational information, i.e. scholarship and financial aid; and to locate resource information on such topics as domestic violence and parenting classes.

Statewide Teen Conference

The Department's eighth annual Teen Conference for youth, staff, foster parents and contracted independent living service providers was held on June 29, 2000 at Worcester State College. The theme was *Different Paths – Same Direction – Independence*. As always, youth were involved in all aspects of the planning for the conference. An overwhelming success, more than 200 youth, staff and substitute care providers attended this conference. As is the tradition, youth co-facilitated the conference. Three teens

managed the registration of participants and distributed the T-shirts, bags, etc. Two youth guided participants throughout the day by delivering opening remarks, introducing the Commissioner and other speakers, making announcements, distributing raffle prizes and making the closing statements. All fourteen workshops were co-facilitated by a youth and an adult trainer and addressed such topics as, decision-making, self-expression, dating violence prevention, appreciating diversity, and future goal planning.

The conference reviews were very positive. Youth were able to share experiences, learn from and listen to one another. One participant wrote:

"Thank you for the chance to meet and share my experiences with other DSS kids. Now that I'm 17 years old I realize that it's important to think about my future. This conference and hearing from the other kids encouraged me to set some real goals for myself and begin taking advantage of all the resources DSS has to offer."

Teen Newsletter

The Wave, the Department's teen newsletter, is written by DSS youth for DSS youth and has generated much positive involvement and feedback from youth. Since the first two-page edition, the newsletter has grown to four large (17" x 10 1/2") pages of articles, poems, specialty columns, artwork, advice and cartoons created by DSS in-care youth. Through their work youth share their experiences, observations, suggestions, challenges and achievements with others who might benefit. The newsletter also provides an effective means of informing our youth of the many youth sponsored activities in which they can participate, i.e. Regional Youth Symposiums, Youth Advisory Board, Peer Led Support Groups, etc.

The Wave will continue to be published quarterly and mailed to all youth in out-of-home placement who are age 14 or older. In addition, the newsletter is sent to all group care programs, area and regional offices, as well as the State House. (Recent editions of **The Wave** are attached.)

Life Skill Workshops

Several workshops targeting life skill development in areas such as money management, banking, apartment hunting and maintenance, job seeking, and financial aid are presented by the Adolescent Outreach Program and peer leaders to assist youth in preparing for their transitions from care. Volunteers from the community, a bank representative, financial aid officer, real estate agent, etc. assisted in recent presentations. In addition, the Department regularly holds Higher Education forums across the state to enable youth in agency care to realize the opportunities available to them after attainment of a high school diploma or GED certificate. These events provided adolescents with the chance to explore career avenues, higher education options, learn about the scholarships and financial aid available, and receive assistance in completing the forms. A representative from the State

Scholarship Office is usually available at these presentations to provide additional information and support.

Mentoring Program

Youth who do not have a family or network of friends to depend on need to develop the connections in the community that will help them with employment, housing, personal goals, recreation, etc. Realizing this and responding to the recommendation from the Youth Advisory Board, the Department's Employment and Mentoring Coordinator has recruited and trained mentors and facilitated 20 matches with DSS youth. Ongoing supervision and training is provided to the mentors to support these relationships. Recruitment for mentors is ongoing.

IV. STATISTICAL DATA

A. Adolescents in Placement

As of December 2000, there were 4289 adolescents and young adults ages 14-23 in out-of-home placement with the Department of Social Services. This number includes youth in foster care, community residences, emergency shelters, independent living programs, institutions, pre-adoptive homes and in placement with relatives. Youth who were currently "on the run" when the count was taken were also included. The breakdown by age is as follows:

ADOLESCENTS IN PLACEMENT (December, 2000)

Age 14	720
Age 15	943
Age 16	897
Age 17	865
Age 18	448
Age 19	181
Age 20	126
Age 21	85
Age 22	21
Age 23	3

Total	4289
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Total number of youth in placement age 14 through 18 = 3873

Total number of youth in placement age 19 through 23 = 416

B. Placement by Setting

As of December 2000, there were 13,988 adolescents ages 14 through 23 receiving services from the Department. Of these, 4289 (31%) were in some type of out-of-home placement.

The following breakdown by placement setting for youth ages 14-23 indicates that foster care continues to be, by far, the primary placement resource for our youth.

<u>Placement Type</u>	<u>December 2000</u>
DSS Foster Care	45%
Contracted Foster Care	14%
Commonworks	23%
Residential Treatment	7%
Non-Referral Location*	6%
Group Care	5%
DSS Contracted Shelter	1%

* Includes hospitals, other state agencies, relatives/family friends, on the run from placement.

Source: Family Net, December 2000

C. Service Plan Goals

As of December 2000, thirty-three percent (33%) of the youth ages 14-23 in placement had a service plan goal of independent living. As the chart on the next page indicates, “independent living” is the primary service plan goal for all youth ages 17 and older. The majority of youth ages 14 and 15 have “reunify family” as their service plan goal.

Service Plan Goal of Independent Living

<u>Age</u>	<u>December 2000</u>
14	2%
15	9%
16	25%
17	52%
18	76%
19	81%
20	69%
21	62%
22	48%
23	67%

Source: Family Net, December 2000

The Department recognizes that the identification of appropriate service plan goals for adolescents in out-of-home placement is essential to the success of their transition from placement to community living. The Department's Foster Care Review Unit provides objective oversight of each youth's service plan goal. Staff from this unit convene a Foster Care Review meeting every six months for each youth in placement up to age 18 to ensure that out-of-home placement is necessary and appropriate and that he/she is receiving independent living skill training in preparation for discharge from care to community living. The adolescents are expected to be active participants in these meetings, as are representatives from the placement (foster home or program), birth parents, and the case manager. Trained volunteers from the community are also recruited to participate in each youth's review to provide additional objectivity. These reviews are important safeguards for ensuring that independent living tasks are identified for all youth in placement.

The Adolescent Outreach staff are making every effort to participate in foster care reviews for those adolescents who have a service plan goal of independent living, even if those youth are not on the active Outreach caseload. The Outreach staff inform all participants of the Department's available resources related to independent living preparation, including the Outreach program, Discharge Support Program, Independent Living Support Program, Tuition Waiver and Foster Child Grant Programs, etc.

The youth's Independent Living Skill Assessment is also reviewed at these meetings if the youth is in group care to ensure sufficient progress toward readiness for their transition to adulthood. These assessments are mandatory for all youth age 14 and older in group care placement regardless of service plan goal.

D. Length of Time in Placement

Following is a table identifying the length of time youth 14 and older have been in out-of-home placement with the Department. Our current data collection system reports the information as listed below. Youth who have been in placement for more than four years are presently counted in one summary category. However, in the near future, Family Net, our statewide client information system, should be able to provide improved statistical data regarding all of our consumers.

AGE	.5 YR OR LESS	.5 – 1 YR	.1 – 1.5 YRS	1.5 – 2 YRS	.2 – 4 YRS	4 YRS	TOTAL
14 YEAR OLD	163	141	84	68	127	137	720
15 YEAR OLD	249	178	114	85	171	146	943
16 YEAR OLD	203	131	112	80	197	174	897
17 YEAR OLD	141	119	111	85	226	183	865
18 YEAR OLD	32	31	42	44	161	138	448
19 YEAR OLD	5	2	10	14	74	76	181
20 YEAR OLD	0	2	3	3	49	69	126
21 YEAR OLD	0	2	0	0	13	70	85
22 YEAR OLD	0	0	0	0	2	19	21
23 YEAR OLD	0	0	0	0	1	2	3

There has been an increase in the percentage of youth who remain in care, particularly age 17 and older. This is likely due to the fact that youth are remaining in placement after age 18 to continue their education or vocational training.

Many of our older youth who have been in care for two or more years will either transition to independent living after age 18 or whenever they complete their education or will require on-going support services from another state agency and will remain in DSS placement until the Department of Mental Retardation or the Department of Mental Health assumes case responsibility (usually at age 22).

Percentage of Youth in Placement for 2 or More Years

	July '96	July '97	Jan. '98	Sept.'99	Dec.00
AGE 16	30%	32%	31%	38%	41%
AGE 17	40%	42%	40%	43%	47%
AGE 18	65%	60%	60%	55%	67%
AGE 19	82%	80%	71%	73%	83%
AGE 20	89%	88%	87%	93%	94%
AGE 21	80%	90%	88%	97%	98%
AGE 22	88%	60%	44%	98%	100%

Source ASSIST Extract Tapes (July, 1996, July, 1997, and Jan. 1998 and Family Net, Sept. 1999 and Dec. 2000)

Understanding the importance of life skill preparation for all youth, but particularly for those in placement, the Department has assumed the responsibility to ensure that our youth receive the life skills training they need. The Standards of Independent Living which apply to all youth in DSS placement who are age 14 and older mandate life skills assessments be completed every six (6) months and two (2) hours weekly of life skills (PAYA curriculum) training be provided to these youth by their substitute care providers. The case managers, youth, and substitute care providers identify an adolescent's life skill needs, develop, and implement a service plan to guide the delivery of appropriate services. The PAYA curriculum provides specific "skill plans" for each skill area, e.g., budgeting, health care, decision-making, and job search/maintenance. These plans assist the case manager, PAYA trainer and the youth in identifying the goal (skill to be developed) as well as the strategy to accomplish the goal. The Life Skills

Assessment and Reassessments become addenda to the original service plan for the youth.

The Department also recognizes that many older adolescents, ages 20-23, who have been in care for two or more years generally will require on-going support services from another state agency and will remain in placement until the Department of Mental Retardation or Department of Mental Health assumes case responsibility (usually at age 22). If these youth are able to benefit from the PAYA life skill curriculum, they, too, receive independent living preparation prior to discharge. Through the Adolescent Outreach Program and the provision of technical assistance offered to the area offices by the staff of the Adolescent Services Unit, youth requiring longer term supportive services can receive assistance in their preparation for the transition to their next location, whether it be a placement through another state agency or a modified independent living setting. The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health has trained some of its residential providers in the use of the PAYA curriculum and has consulted with DSS regarding strategies for integrating the PAYA curriculum into their treatment programs.

V. PLACEMENT OPTIONS FOR YOUTH

During the last few years the Department's enhancements to its independent living services have stimulated the development of a culture within the agency that recognizes life skills training and comprehensive discharge planning as essential for all youth in any out-of-home placement. The Standards for Independent Living Services, the Life Skills Assessment and Discharge/Case Closing Plan, in addition to the PAYA curriculum, have provided our staff, caretakers and youth with the guidelines and tools to ensure that youth transitioning into the community will be ready to meet the challenges they will face. The providers of residential/group care and independent living programs have incorporated the life skills assessment and two hours per week of PAYA life skills training into their programs since January 1, 1996. These services are impacting 35% of all youth age 14 and older residing in out-of-home placement. A goal to be achieved during the next two years is the addition of 59% of Massachusetts youth age 14 and older in foster care placement (including those in unrelated foster home settings, with relatives, therapeutic foster care, etc.) to this number, ensuring that these youth have access to life skills training regardless of placement setting. Although a significant number of foster parents already provide this life skill training, the goal is to mandate that all providers meet this expectation in the near future. The Department has been continuing to present additional trainings (training of trainers' format) and providing technical assistance to the providers and family resource staff in order to prepare all family resource providers for this challenge.

The continuity of life skills training has already been significantly improved with the standardization of the assessment and curriculum requirements. Youth who move from one placement to another take their PAYA modules with them. The new provider continues life skills training at the point where the previous provider ended. The Foster Care Review Unit has been monitoring the success of this endeavor at the semi-annual review meetings for all youth in placement ages 14-18.

Given the diverse placement needs of its adolescents, the Department improved its service options in FFY '99, '00 and '01 to include more resources that are designed to meet the individual needs of specific populations of youth and to ensure that youth are served in the most appropriate and least restrictive setting possible. The agency's Commonworks Network of residential programs was modified to improve client services, providing more flexibility in service delivery and an aftercare component to ensure that youths' gains are maintained following program discharge.

The **Commonworks Network** is a statewide residential care system designed for the most severely troubled adolescents in the care of the Department. This unique model provides a range of treatment services through a cooperative venture in the form of six Networks, statewide, where providers participate as a team to provide segments of placement services in a continuum ranging from staff secure care to supervised independent living. The program types include:

- Behavioral Treatment Residences
- Group Homes
- Independent Living Programs
- Time Out Programs
- Specialized Foster Care
- Special Programs (to address specific treatment needs, i.e. sexual offenders, fire setters)
- After Care Services

The **Family Residence** model of substitute care provides youth with specialized independent living and mental health services in a setting less restrictive than group care, yet more structured and service intensive than regular foster care. Family Residences were developed to bridge the gap between foster care and residential care and to divert the placement of children from more restrictive placements, such as group care. Although family residences are technically highly specialized foster homes, the structure models a small group home with trained staff who are experienced in effectively dealing with issues of loss, grief, depression, aggression, challenge to authority, fear of failure, fear of success, etc. Adolescents whose relationships with family are so problematic that their ability to live cooperatively in a foster family setting is seriously compromised find the family residences less conflictive.

Family Residences provide and/or coordinate all the necessary services for teens including individual/group counseling, medical care, education/job training, and independent living preparation, as approved by the DSS case manager. Parenting skill training is also provided to teens residing in a young parents' program. Each youth becomes an active participant in his/her needs assessment and service planning. The goal is to effectively prepare youth for the challenges of community living. Teens are supported in a re-direction of their energies with a goal of self-sufficiency instead of dependency. The discharge outcomes for youth served by the current family residences have been very positive.

Members of the Youth Advisory Board participated in the review of the Family Residence RFP prior to its distribution.

Programs for Independent Living Preparation

In addition to the life skills training youth receive via the PAYA curriculum, the Department provides residential independent living services through contracts with provider agencies or by awarding eligible youth their own vendor payments to live under case manager supervision in the community. These two service options are described on the following page:

A. Contracted Services

Provider agencies under contract or purchase agreement with DSS deliver residential adolescent services ranging from highly structured programs with a focus on clinical treatment to supervised independent living apartments for youth who are readying for their more imminent transition from care to the community.

The residential independent living programs offer a continuum of services, the most structured of which is a **group home model**. Such programs provide in-house supervision; however, youth are able to attend school or a vocational training program in the community. They may also work in the community without the on-site supervision of staff. Other variations include the **supervised apartment** where two to four youth live together in their own apartment; supervision is provided by a house manager who lives in another apartment within the same building.

For youth who do well in a **mentor-type setting**, DSS purchases a model utilizing adult "living partners" and/or independent living foster parents. These youth may not be ready to live alone but are ready for a less structured living arrangement. The support and guidance provided by the adult role models teach youth the various intricacies of self-sufficiency in the community within the safety net of the agency.

The least restrictive models, scattered site apartments, allow youth to live in their **own apartments**, often with roommates, while the supervision is provided by a program monitor who visits the apartment regularly to discuss any issues or problems youth are encountering.

All of the above program models utilize the Department's standardized PAYA curriculum to provide life skills training. This ensures continuity of learning should a youth move from one placement setting to another.

Utilizing the Chafee Independent Living Grant funds, DSS has purchased nine residential transitional living program slots with two providers in the Western Region of the state. These nine slots will be a combination of staffed and supervised apartments.

B. TIL Payments

The Department provides TIL (Transition to Independent Living) payments directly to youth who are determined competent to live in an approved placement (i.e. college dormitory, apartment with or without roommates, or in the home with extended family) without on-site supervision. Via this provision, youth receive their own foster care payments to fund their living costs and daily expenses. These youth are either attending an educational program or are training for a job/career. DSS case managers provide supervision to these youth. The area office Adolescent Outreach Worker will often be assigned the case and will assist in supervision and support to the youth. Youth receive assistance in developing and maintaining monthly budgets and on-going monitoring of their functioning within the community, including compliance with all service plan tasks. Should it be determined that a youth's needs change and he/she requires additional support/supervision, the TIL payments will be replaced by more structured placement services. As of December 2000, there were 210 youth statewide who were receiving TIL payments. This is a 24% increase over last year, attesting to the fact that youth are choosing to remain in DSS care to pursue education or vocational training rather than discharge at age 18.

**FFY 2001 CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM
TITLE IV-E INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM
BUDGET SUMMARY**

PERSONNEL	\$160,000
FRINGE	\$35,200

<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Functional Title</u>
Manager IV 1.0 FTE	Associate Director Adolescent Services

- Coordinate Title IV-E Independent Living Program statewide and all related independent living activities
- Manage the Adolescent Outreach Program and all youth leadership activities
- Coordinate and monitor the delivery of independent living services with area offices and contracted providers
- Provide training and technical assistance to area offices regarding the delivery of independent living services to adolescents
- Develop new independent living curriculum and resource material
- Maintain tracking statistics for youth discharged from the Adolescent Outreach Program and modify program as needed
- Develop and implement new adolescent programs and resources

Program Coordinator II 1.0 FTE	Adolescent Specialist
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- Assist in the delivery of training and technical assistance to area offices regarding independent living services and adolescents (PAYA trainings)
- Coordinate the PAYA life skills incentive program statewide
- Assist in the development of new life skills curriculum material and resource information for adolescents transitioning to independent living
- Participate in the assessment of court diversion programs for adolescents and assist in the development of successful program models for DSS
- Assist in the development of new programs and resources for adolescents
- Coordinate the Independent Living Support Program, the Discharge Support Program and the William Warren Scholarship Program

Program Coordinator II Youth Development Coordinator
1.0 FTE

- Identify youth for participation in the employment and mentoring programs and provide support and supervision to those youth once matched with a mentor or placed in a job
- Assess youth needs and assist them in determining job interests, abilities, and in accessing necessary training
- Teach employment and career skills to DSS youth
- Recruit and provide ongoing support to employers interested in hiring DSS youth in career-building positions
- Recruit, train, and provide support and supervision to adult mentors for DSS youth
- Provide supervision to Adolescent Outreach Workers

Program Coordinator II (3) Residential Planner (State)
.33 FTE each

- Provide monitoring and oversight of group care programs to ensure compliance with the Independent Living Standards, including the use of the Life Skill Assessments and Discharge/Case Closing Plans
- Provide consultations and technical assistance to all group care program staff to assist them in effectively incorporating life skills training into their program designs
- Provide feedback to program staff regarding implementation issues, recommendations for program/curriculum change, etc.

Staff Travel \$ 8,000

Travel expenses (in state and out-of-state/conference) for state staff and Adolescent Outreach Workers will be charged to the grant.

Training/Regional Youth \$ 13,000
Symposiums

Six regional youth symposiums will be held annually to foster the development of collaborative and leadership skills in youth. Youth will participate in every aspect of the planning and presentation of these symposiums. Expenses will include fees for workshop trainers, food, T-shirts, materials, etc. Donations from corporate sponsors or stores will be solicited for raffle prizes.

Printing/Supplies **\$ 14,000**

Printing costs for the quarterly publication of THE WAVE and the Employment and Mentoring brochures will be charged to the grant as will reproduction costs for the statewide distribution of the PAYA modules to area offices and provider agencies.

Memberships **\$ 3,000**

The Department's annual dues for membership in the National Independent Living Association and conference sponsorship fees to the New England Network for Child, Youth and Family Services will be funded through the grant.

Equipment **\$ 8,000**

The staff of the Residential and Adolescent Unit and the Adolescent Outreach Program are provided with pagers to facilitate their access to clients and providers. Staff who do not have access to a computer in the area office and those who spend much time in the field also have laptop computers for more efficient record keeping.

Contracted Services **\$ 1,498,088**

Staff and Travel

The Adolescent Outreach Program staff will be funded through the grant. Outreach staff provide intensive, one-to-one life skills training to DSS youth who are likely to remain in care until or after age 18 as well as to former foster care youth. They also work cooperatively with DSS social workers, substitute care and community service providers to improve the coordination and delivery of independent living services to current and former DSS foster care youth and facilitate planned, appropriate discharges of youth from placement to community living.

Secretarial support is also purchased to provide the administrative support to the Outreach Program.

William Warren Scholarship **\$ 35,000**

The Department's scholarship program for current and former DSS foster care youth and young adults attending an accredited college or vocational training program will receive \$35,000 from this grant.

Youth Employment Program & Mentoring Program **\$8,000**

Each program will receive \$4,000 for youth related expenses (i.e. bus pass for one month to facilitate transportation to new job; new suit/dress for job; stipends to mentors for special events with youth; food for group trainings and recruitment events.)

Transitional Living Beds **\$ 250,000**

DSS will utilize 30% of its grant funding to develop housing resources for *former* DSS foster care youth age 18-21.

Discharge Support Program **\$ 533,000**

This program pays for start-up costs (i.e. first month's rent, security deposit, etc.) for young adults who are leaving or have left agency care at age 18 –21, are not returning home and are in need of such support.

Massachusetts Matching Funds

The Department of Social Services provides a variety of residential independent living services for youth: small group homes, supervised apartment models and scattered site living. The state's 20% matching funds (approximately \$522,194) for this grant will be taken from the account that funds these programs.

**FFY 2001
Chafee Independent Living Grant Budget
4800-0009**

AA	State Salaries	160,000
BB	Travel	8,000
DD	Fringe Benefits	35,200
EE	Printing/Supplies	14,000
	Sub./Memberships	3,000
	Conference Items	10,000
	Indirect	41,684
JJ	Training	3,000
KK	Equipment	8,000
LL	Beepers	4,000
MM	Consultants (Outreach)	1,498,088
RR	Scholarship/Vocational Exp.	35,000
	Employment Program Stipends	4,000
	Mentoring Program Stipends	4,000
	Transitional Living Beds	250,000
	Discharge Support Program	533,000
TOTAL		\$2,610,972

